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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: COLORADO PRIMARY UPDATE

Classified By: DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick; reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Castiglioni campaign insiders report that electoral certificates for all 5,533 Colorado Party polling stations show Castiglioni has a razor-thin 3,800 vote lead over "oficialista" former Education Minister Blanca Ovelar for the Colorado Party presidential nomination. The formal vote-counting process will begin December 20; final results are not expected for two weeks. While the presidential race remains tight, Ovelar's Senate list, led by President Duarte, appears to have secured a first place finish. Admitting he was overly "passionate" in declaring Ovelar's victory December 16, President Duarte moderated his discourse the next day. This race remains too close to call. While Castiglioni's team believes it has won, the ultimate outcome will depend on Ovelar's ability to disqualify voting centers that supported Castiglioni. END SUMMARY.

A CASTIGLIONI WIN?

12. (C) Castiglioni campaign insiders told PolCouns and DCM separately late December 17 that the former Vice President's team has copies of electoral certificates for all 5,533 Colorado Party polling stations, and that the totals show Castiglioni has a razor-thin 3,800 vote lead over former Education Minister Blanca Ovelar. Out of an abundance of caution, Castiglioni's team will not share their calculations with the media, but will wait for the Colorado Party's electoral tribunal to officially announce the results. The challenge now, they said, is to fend off Ovelar's attempts to disqualify voting centers where Castiglioni won by wide margins based on fraud allegations. The Colorado Party electoral tribunal's quick count, based on 99 percent of polling stations, shows Ovelar with 44.98 percent of the vote and Castiglioni with 44.48 percent.

JANUARY RESULTS

13. (SBU) The formal vote-counting process will begin December 20; final results are not expected for two weeks (deadline is January 10). At least one (major) polling station in Asuncion may repeat the primary because voting was suspended due to violence, including the burning of ballots. December 17 and 18 press coverage carried multiple stories reporting double voting (due to purchased carnets) and claims of electoral fraud.

SENATE/GUBERNATORIAL RACES

14. (U) While the presidential race remains tight, Ovelar's

Senate list, led by President Duarte, appears to have secured a first place finish. According to quick counts, Ovelar's list won 41.6 percent of the vote, as compared to Castiglioni's Senate list with 29.8 percent. (NOTE: President Duarte won 31,000 more votes in his Senate race than Ovelar won in the presidential contest. END NOTE). In third place, Alderete's list won 8.8 percent of the vote. Quick counts also show that Ovelar's gubernatorial candidates won 15 of 17 slots. Ovelar candidate and former Minister of Industry and Commerce Jose Maria Ibanez likely won the nomination for governor of the Central Department (Asuncion). Castiglioni candidate Nelson Aguinalgalde appears to have won the contest in Alto Parana (Ciudad del Este), which showed a tendency to be heavily anti-Ovelar.

DUARTE'S DISCOURSE

¶5. (U) President Duarte moderated his discourse on the afternoon and evening of December 17. Duarte admitted being overly "passionate" on December 16, and said he will stand by results, even if Ovelar loses by one vote. The OAS electoral mission continues to urge all sides to wait for final results.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) This race remains too close to call. While Castiglioni's team privately believes it has won, the ultimate outcome will depend on Ovelar's ability to disqualify voting centers that supported Castiglioni. In our view, two factors in this race speak volumes: 1) Despite the longevity and sheer power of the Colorado machine, 56 percent of voters did not vote for Ovelar. Even given the relatively low voter turnout (which disproportionately hurt Castiglioni), Castiglioni is giving the Colorado machine a run for its money; and 2) In a system with no run-offs, the opponents to ruling powers need to remain united or they risk failure. Had Alderete and Castiglioni been able to capitalize on their common opposition to Duarte (and Ovelar), they would be moving ahead now together toward national elections instead of recounting ballots for the next several weeks. END COMMENT.

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